OMRI DAILY DIGEST
No. 51, 13 March 1995

G-24 SAYS NO REFORM, NO AID. The Group of 24 industrialized countries on 10 March warned Eastern Europe that if reforms do not continue, aid will cease, Reuters reported. A statement released that day said there were concerns about "the possible effects on the pace of reform resulting from certain recent political developments . . . Recipient governments are encouraged to continue pursuing active reform policies, [which] are important to the future development of G-24 assistance." A senior official at the European Commission said that the recent ouster of the reform government in Estonia and developments in Slovakia are on people's minds but added that the warning extends to all countries in the region. The commission coordinates aid from the G-24, which has pledged 74.7 billion ECUs since 1989. Another official noted that compared with the $100 billion a year that eastern Germany receives from the federal German authorities, aid to the region has been modest. -- Michael Mihalka, OMRI, Inc.

RFE/RL BEGINS LIVE BROADCASTS FROM PRAGUE. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty began live news broadcasts from their new operations center in Prague on 10 March. A statement released by the U.S. radios says that broadcasters from the Russian, Ukrainian, South Slavic, and Latvian services delivered the first newscasts from studios in the former Federal Assembly Building. RFE/RL broadcasts news and current affairs programs in 21 languages to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Responding to an offer from the Czech government and president to relocate to Prague, President Bill Clinton ordered last July that RFE/RL move to the Czech capital from Munich, Germany, where the radios have been based since 1951. Congress approved the President's decision in August 1994. RFE/RL broadcasts from Prague will expand over the next three months, and the Munich facility will be closed down by 30 June. -- Jiri Pehe, OMRI, Inc.

US BUSINESS DELEGATION TOURS BALTIC STATES. Ruth Harkin, president of the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation, headed a delegation of banking, telecommunications, transport, and energy specialists who visited Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on 6-10 March, BNS reported. The purpose of the tour was to help American companies find suitable partners for investments. Several agreements were reached, including a saw mill project worth $4 million in Lithuania and telecommunications projects in Latvia. President Bill Clinton expressed support for strengthening economic ties with the Baltic States at a conference on trade and investment in Eastern Europe that took place in Cleveland in January. The tour can be seen as a concrete follow-up to the conference. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

DUTCH COMPANY LIKELY TO RECONSTRUCT LITHUANIAN AIRPORT. Lithuanian Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius told a press conference on 9 March that the Dutch electronics company Philips appears to have won the contest to convert the former Soviet military airport at Zokniai to commercial use, BNS reported the next day. Philips estimates that the reconstruction can be carried out within a year at a cost of about $24 million and that the investment can be recouped within seven years if there are at least 13 flights a day. Zokniai is one of the largest air bases in Europe. After runways and lighting are repaired and a new navigation system installed, it will be a major competitor among European commercial airports. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.